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Important Grant Wood Painting Among CMA Acquisitions Now on View

CLEVELAND — *January*, a winter farm scene by the great American Regionalist painter Grant Wood, has been acquired by the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA). "With the purchase of the Wood," commented CMA director Katharine Lee Reid, "we have seized a rare opportunity to fill a significant gap in our holdings with a singular late work by this renowned artist." Other works acquired this month include unique prints — among them an extremely rare 15th-century woodcut of the *Pietà* and a superb impression by Rembrandt showing the biblical character Tobit, whom Rembrandt especially favored; a luxury small-sword lavished with gold and blue enamel; and a drawing by Holocaust victim Charlotte Salomon. These and other recent acquisitions are now on view at the museum.

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Cedar Rapids native Grant Wood is best known for his depiction of a stoic farm couple, the man holding his pitchfork, *American Gothic* (1930). In *January*, snow-laden shocks of corn recede into the distance like a line of armored soldiers. A trail of paw prints leading into the shelter of one of the shocks is the only evidence of life. An abundant Midwestern landscape is more common in Regionalist painting. According to curator of American art Henry Adams, "*January* represents a surprising inversion of this; although occasionally Regionalist paintings deal with dark themes, the power with which this work presents a landscape of oblivion is unique."

Dated 1940 on the front, the canvas has an inscription on the back indicating its completion on Jan. 28, 1941, so the painting's title may reference not only the wintry subject but also the time when Wood made it.

January has had only two owners: the noted film director King Vidor, who bought it the year it was painted, and a private collector who acquired it after King Vidor's death.

An extremely rare woodcut of the *Pietà* from 1435–1450, colored with watercolor, is extraordinary in its large size (16 x 11-1/4 inches), fresh color, and fine state of preservation. It is one of only about 20 surviving examples of single sheet (single image) woodcuts produced in mid-15th-century northern Europe by anonymous craftsmen; only one other is in the U.S. Says curator of prints Jane Glaubinger, "A powerful, poignant image of the Virgin and Christ, this simple, direct image was meant to enlighten a mostly illiterate public and inspire religious devotion."

The Rembrandt etching just acquired, *The Blindness of Tobit (The Larger Plate)*, was executed in 1651, when the artist was at the height of his powers as a printmaker and experimented continuously with inking and wiping the printing plate. For this impression, he used his fingers to manipulate a very fine layer of pale ink remaining on the surface of the plate, leaving fingerprints. Rembrandt was inspired throughout his career by the story of the poor but pious Tobit, recounted in the apocryphal book of the same name. In all, he executed about 55 drawings, etchings, and paintings telling the story of Tobit's blindness and miraculous recovery. CMA owns a fine impression of the 1641 etching and drypoint, *The Angel Departing from the Family of Tobit*, and the finest drawing from Rembrandt's Tobit series, *Tobias Healing His Father's Blindness* (about 1640–45).

A third print acquisition is *St. Peter* (about 1547), a chiaroscuro woodcut printed in four colors by painter, sculptor, and designer Domenico Beccafumi. His images of the apostles are considered his most skillful, complex, and successful prints, and, according to print curator Jane Glaubinger, the most extraordinary color prints of the Italian Renaissance.

Almost the entire output of German artist Charlotte Salomon (1917–1943), a series of over 769 small works on paper entitled *Life? or Theater? (Leben? oder Theater?)*, was saved by her doctor just before her deportation to Auschwitz, and later donated by her parents to the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam. The two-sided work just acquired is the only Salomon known to be in an American museum. It was owned by Ottilie Moore, with whom the artist lived in southern France; it passed to Moore's driver, then to a private collector, before coming on the market now. Its principal *Dinner Party* image shows Salomon's stepmother, Paula Lindberg, at the head of the table, and Charlotte herself standing at the lower left, offering food to one of the guests. On the other side is a rapid compositional sketch of the same scene and a close-up portrait of Lindberg. All the characteristics of Salomon's style are apparent here — thickly applied gouache, bright colors, acutely observed facial features, and a skewed, turned-up composition — almost as if a camera were recording the scene from above — lending her work its cinematic quality.

A painting of the French Revolution, *Oedipus at Colonus* (1798), by Fulchran-Jean Harriet, becomes the first work by this artist to enter an American collection. Katharine Reid says, 'This is an important addition for Cleveland, because our holdings of French 19th-century paintings are so

strong thanks to our great benefactor, Noah L. Butkin." A student of the great neoclassical painter Jacques-Louis David, Harriet painted this work when he was only 22 years old, dating it "Year VI of the Revolution," when the ancient myth of the exiled ruler was a favorite subject for many French writers and artists. In Harriet's portrayal, the blinded, tragic king and his exhausted daughter are in a pietà-like pose, Oedipus gesturing in a way that seems to both censure himself and shield the faithful Antigone.

The neoclassical goldsmiths' art is epitomized by the *Small-Sword* just added to the museum's beloved armor collection. The hilt decoration features pierced designs in openwork, filigree scrolls, cables of twisted gold wire, faceted gold studs (known as "brilliants"), and panels of translucent blue enamel filled with gold stars. This is from the latest, and most refined, stage of development of the small-sword, the light and quick weapon of choice for aristocratic civilians. It was probably meant for use in formal or court occasions (ca. 1790–1800, overall length 97 cm).

A person of great importance in ancient China would have owned the *Mirror with Jade Disk Inset* just acquired (late Warring States–early Western Han dynasty). Mirrors with jade insets are perhaps the rarest of all known bronze mirrors. The luminous nephrite in this example is skillfully carved with images of phoenixes and oxen. A key addition to the museum's small jade collection, this work also enriches CMA's increasingly important mirror holdings, whose core is the Carter collection now on view at the China Institute, New York.

Where & when to see these and other new acquisitions

The Wood is in gallery 239. The Harriet is in gallery 229. In recent acquisitions gallery 201 are the *Small-Sword*; the Rembrandt print and the woodcut *Pietà*; the Salomon drawing and a drawing by Carl Grossberg (*Berlin Power Plant Under Construction*, 1930); and the *Mirror with Jade Disk Insert*.

On or about Apr. 30, works on paper in gallery 201, which may be damaged by exposure to light, will be replaced with the following: the Beccafumi print; an Indian miniature painting, *Rama and Sita Being Taken to the Priest to Fix the Wedding Date* (about 1700–1710); and a Limoge Art Nouveau *Vase* (designed by Georges de Feure; made by Gérard, Dufraissex, and Abbot; about 1903).

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